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9 September 1986

Talking Points on Suriname for ADDI

Plagued by incompetent military leadership, falling troop morale, and possible defections, the six-year-old regime of Desire Bouterse appears to be losing ground in its efforts to contain an increasingly active rebel group.

-- [redacted] rebel leader Ronnie Brunswijk claims to head a 120-man force.

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-- Since mid-July, there have been at least six confirmed rebel attacks in eastern Suriname, bringing military casualties to at least 16 and possible defections to more than a dozen in the 2,000-man Army.

[redacted]

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-- A civilian helicopter reportedly supplied by the Brazilians to upgrade the military's search and transport capabilities was shot down by the rebels. [redacted]

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Civilian support for the regime probably is tentative and thin and may erode quickly if Bouterse heeds the counsel of some advisers to take harsher measures against the populace.

-- The military has alienated the Bush Negroes who control eastern Suriname, and some may be at least passively supporting Brunswijk, himself a Bush Negro.

-- Leaders of Suriname's traditional parties and some labor unions have publicly supported Bouterse during the crisis, partly out of fear, and the populace has not rallied behind him. [redacted]

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Bouterse continues to charge that foreign governments -- particularly France and the Netherlands -- are aiding the rebels.

-- The French reportedly have not impeded the rebels' use of French Guiana for sanctuary and resupply, [redacted]

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-- Bouterse's suspicions of Western involvement probably are fueled by his largely unsuccessful attempts to gain military

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assistance from Western countries.

- Bouterse's frustration over the lack of Western aid and French and Dutch reluctance to act against exile groups linked to the rebels may eventually prompt him to accept recent Libyan offers of assistance. [REDACTED]

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The rebels have a good chance of expanding isolated guerrilla activities beyond the east.

- Brunswijk's successes appear to be galvanizing exile groups, which have a history of divisiveness and ineffectiveness.

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